cirrus™

Improving Student Success Through Cloud-based Learning Solutions

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Cloud computing is the on-demand, web-based availability of computer systems—one where the user isn't responsible for the management of the system. This new way of sharing data and resources is changing how people communicate and collaborate on their computers and mobile devices. The world is recognizing the power of cloud-based applications that enhance accessibility and opportunities for establishing effective collaborations. In his article, "Advantages for Adopting Cloud-Based Application In Education," graduate professor and technology guru Arun Goyal identifies several ways that cloud applications are influencing today's education system:

1. **Students Save On Expensive Textbooks** – Cloud-based textbooks (eBooks) tend to be a lot less expensive than print textbooks. More affordable digital content lowers the barrier to access quality learning solutions.

2. **Learning Content Material Is Not Outdated** – Cloud-based content is easy to update in real-time. This enables students to gain constant access to the latest learning resources.

3. **No Need for Expensive Hardware** – Cloud-based applications run on web browsers and are compatible with most mobile devices (such as PCs, Macs, and Chromebooks). Often individuals find they no longer need additional devices like external hard drives.

4. **No Need for Expensive Software** – The biggest advantage of cloud-based computing for students is their access to use high-quality and cost-effective academic software programs.

5. **Reaching Out to a Diverse Range of Students** – Cloud-based applications in education open newer opportunities for all types of students. Since education has moved online, it has become more and more possible for adult students to finish their education and receive specific training in areas that may improve their employability.

6. **No Need to Carry Around Devices** – Students and professors do not need to worry about carrying devices, such as thumb drives and CDs, which can break or get lost. When information resides in a cloud-based environment, students can access it anytime, anywhere.

7. **Easy Access** – Everything from lesson plans, grades, notes, slides, labs, etc. can be made available on cloud applications. All the tools that are used in teaching can be easily uploaded and accessed anytime by the students and instructors.

8. **Data Security** – Even in the world of education, data, images, information, and content need to be stored in a secure manner. Most cloud-based mobile applications offer strong authentication measures to ensure that the academic material is made available only to the right people. If some modifications happen to the IT infrastructure at the college, the content will still be available to instructors and to the students.

Cloud-based applications in education make it easy for students to share their assignments with instructors in an easy and trackable manner. The cloud facilitates easy collaborations, allowing student groups to work on projects and assignments in the cloud more efficiently.

Cirrus Eliminates Obstacles

Every student is different, yet many face similar obstacles that threaten their success throughout their educational experience, such as difficulty accessing learning solutions outside the computer lab, inability to hit the ground running on the first day of class and complying with complex system requirements.

These challenges are common in education, and they prevent students from experiencing a smooth start to the semester and succeeding in their course.

To eliminate these obstacles for students, Paradigm Education Solutions delivers complete course content in Cirrus, a cloud-based learning environment that is accessible on PCs, Macs, and Chromebooks—anytime, anywhere. With Cirrus, students can:

- Access complete course content in seconds, no installations required, not even Microsoft Office (MSO) 365 for 2019.
- Enjoy flexibility to access course content and MSO applications from multiple devices.
- Work in all MSO applications from their preferred devices, including MACs.

As with any technology, especially cloud-based technology, there are system requirements that are essential for its effective use. To access live-in-the-application activities, Cirrus requires that all users have a license to Microsoft Office 365.

> Ninety-nine percent of colleges get the Microsoft Office 365 Education License software for free. Coordinate with your IT Department to understand your licensing options.

Understanding the Microsoft Office 365 Licensing Options

- Microsoft Enrollment for Education Solutions
- Microsoft Office 365 Education License (use a student's e-mail address)
- Purchase Office 365 for Home directly from Microsoft
- Paradigm provides limited copies of a 180-day trial of Microsoft Office 365 that could be included in the courseware package

Technical Support

To ensure students and instructors have a seamless and successful experience using Cirrus, Paradigm offers unparalleled white-glove technical support and onboarding preparation.

Live online chat is available for students and instructors 24/7/365. Look for the "Start Chat" icon in the bottom right corner of every page at Paradigm's Help Site.

Instructor phone support is available for instructors who prefer to discuss their questions over the phone at 877-224-2076.

Using Cirrus

System Requirements

- Cirrus is cloud-based and can be used with a PC, Mac, and Chromebook. Mobile devices, such as a phone or an iPad are not supported.
- Broadband Internet Connection: minimum 512Kbps connection (if you can play a YouTube video, the system will work).
- All users, including Mac users, should use the Google Chrome browser. Safari is not supported and other browsers (such as Internet Explorer, Firefox, and Edge) may work, but have not been validated.

End User Requirements

Activation Codes

Cirrus activation codes are required for students who wish to access Cirrus content. Purchase options include:

- Option 1:   1 code – 1 course
- Option 2:   1 code – access up to 2 courses for 1 semester
- Option 3:   1 code – access up to 4 courses for 1 year
- Option 4:   1 code – access up to 6 courses over 2 years

> Ninety-eight percent of colleges are using Option 1. Codeless access to Cirrus is also available. Please contact your local Account Manager for more information and pricing.

Activation Code Types

Activation Codes:
These codes can be purchased from the college's bookstore or online at Paradigm's Store.

17-Day Trial Codes:
Activation codes can be provided by instructors to provide students with temporary access to their course content. When trial codes expire, students must activate their content with a Cirrus Activation Code.

The codes are provided in students' courseware bundles. Each course package purchased at a bookstore may include a code card with the package. The codes from online orders are sent via email. *Please be sure to check your email's junk or spam folder.*
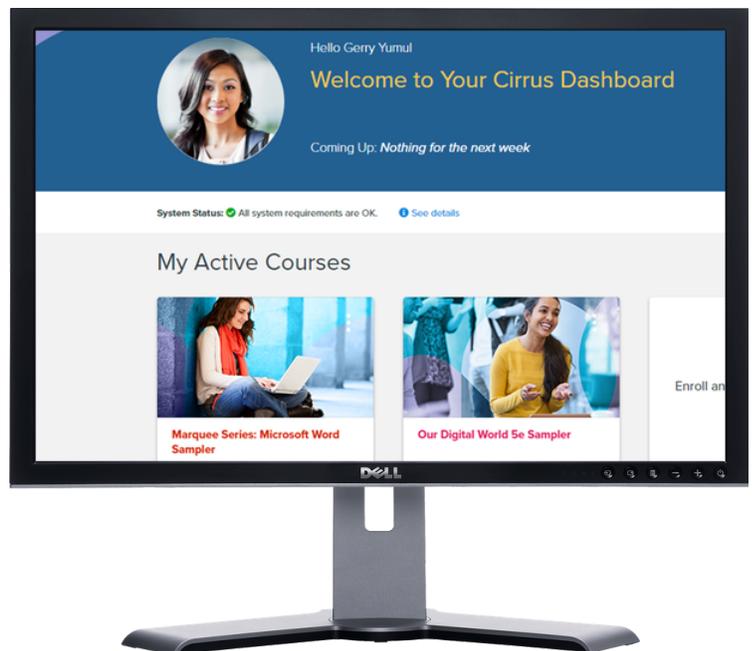
Registration

1. Students accessing content in Paradigm's Cirrus LMS can go directly to Cirrus.ParadigmEducation.com and select the Getting Started button. They need to enter their activation code. If they don't have a code, one can purchased at Paradigm's Store.

2. Students accessing Paradigm's content through a college's LMS should go directly to the LMS and log in. When they click on their first activity, they will be asked for an activation code. Students should then enter their activation code. After the code is entered and students can access their course content, we recommend that the students complete the validation process described below.

How to Validate Microsoft Office 365 in Cirrus

To access content from any Mac, PC, or Chromebook anywhere, students simply need to validate that they have an Office 365 license.

1. Students do not need to download anything. They just need to go to an Exercise, Project, Hands On Activity, or Skills Exam to initiate the validation process. It is a one-time validation process. After successfully validating their account, students will not be asked to validate again.

2. Students should disable Popup Blockers.

3. Students will need to validate using their student e-mail address.

4. Students should complete the following steps to activate their Microsoft Office 365 Account.

     a. Select Sign In.
     b. Activate Office – type in student e-mail address.
     c. Choice of accounts – select school account.
     d. Use this account everywhere – select Yes.
     e. You're all set page – select Done
     f. When validation is complete, the student will see a success screen.

More details on this process, including a how-to video, are documented on Paradigm's Help Site: Microsoft Office 365 License Validation

LTI Integration Using Cirrus

Instructors have the option to use LTI integration to place Cirrus content into their own learning management system (LMS). The advantages of using LTI can be very beneficial to both the instructors and students:

- The plug-and-play integration significantly reduces the cost and time to integrate digital tools and content.

- The interoperability provides a trusted security of student data and results data passed between applications.

- The use of the integration provides a reliable, consistent, and productive faculty and student experience with technology.

When instructors choose LTI integration of Cirrus for their preferred LMS (i.e. Blackboard, Moodle, D2L, and Canvas) platform, Paradigm's Onboarding Team will deliver Cirrus content to the instructor(s) and IT administrators. The instructor(s) will have the autonomy and academic freedom to design courses as needed in their LMS, using its tools. It is very important to dedicate some preparation time in setting up the design of the course weeks before classes begin.
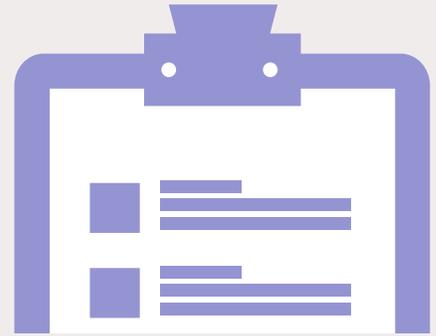
Instructor LTI QuickStart Checklist

Setup up categories; grading weight percentages; or points values, attempts, and due dates within the LMS system.

Create learning modules or folders within the LMS to streamline the design and layout of the course to make the course user-friendly for students.

Be familiar with Cirrus Activity Types and tailor the course to course objectives and the course syllabus.

Make the eBook readily available in the LMS. As an option, the students can now download the eBook for offline use.

Instructor Resources

The Instructor Resources include everything instructors need to plan a course, teach the content covered, and assess student progress and mastery. While offerings may vary by title, below are examples of tools that are provided in Paradigm's *Benchmark Series.*

Planning

Use these materials to prepare for teaching the course.

- **Course Planning Tips and Syllabus Suggestions** are provided to help instructors get started.

- **Performance Goals and Objectives** are outlined for each level of the course.

- **MOS Specialist and Expert Objectives Alignment Charts** show how course content correlates with Microsoft Office Specialist and Expert objectives.

Delivery

Use these materials to demonstrate and reinforce course content.

- **Student Data Files** include all the files students will use to complete chapter and unit activities. These are available to students through the eBook and can also be downloaded. Once downloaded, these can be uploaded to a shared location for students to access when completing their work outside of Cirrus. For students who will be completing their work in the online Cirrus course, these files will be provided at point-of-use within the course.

- **Lesson Plans** are provided for each chapter of the course, along with estimated timings for activities and additional tips.

- **Discussion Questions** can be used in the classroom or online forum to start conversations about the purpose and application of course content and encourage students to reflect on what they have learned.

- The **Content Conversations** blog provides information about changes and updates that may affect the courseware. Access Content Conversations to help ensure that instruction is current and accurate.
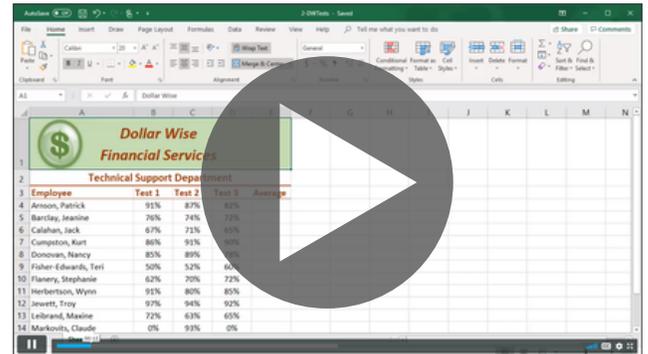
- **Watch and Learn Lessons** are training tools within the Cirrus course templates that can also be used to support in-class lectures. Instructors can access the Watch and Learn Lesson Library for quick access to all the available web-based lessons for the courses. These libraries have been added to the **Instructor Resources** for the *Marquee, Benchmark,* and *Seguin Series.*

These innovative training tools provide a unique teaching experience for instructors to use digital content to assist with lectures and presentations. Using this new digital approach allows instructors the opportunity to use one to two-minute instructional videos to teach specific Microsoft Office tasks and have content readily available at "point of use" in the eBook to display to the students in the classroom.

Assessment

Use these materials to evaluate student performance and track student progress.

- **Tools for Assessing Student Progress** is a document outlining the various assessment tools included with the course materials.

- **Grading Rubrics** are provided for evaluating chapter and unit Review and Assessment activities.

- **Hands On Activities** enable students to complete the chapter activities in provided data files, compare their solutions against a completed skill model answer image, and submit their work for instructor review.

- **Model Answers** for all activities and assessments are provided in both live-application format and as annotated PDFs for instructor use. A separate document provides instructions for using Compare Features in Office to compare student work with the live-file model answers. (Students will have access to watermarked model answer images through their Cirrus course to check their progress as they work through chapter activities.) Hands On Activities require manual grading by the instructor.

- **Quiz and Exam Item Banks** are provided for each chapter. These are provided in RTF format for use in various platforms as well as preloaded into the Cirrus course.

- **Supplemental Assessments** provide additional assessment opportunities for each of the four major Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint).

- **Final Case Studies** are designed to be used at the end of course and test students' ability to apply their skills in realistic workplace scenarios.

Grading Rubric

Case Study

Concept Exam

Cirrus Is The Solution

Thousands of educators across higher ed campuses and institutions nationwide have chosen Paradigm's learning solutions and services for their programs. **Here are five reasons why:**

1. Hands-on learning using technology that is easy to use and closely aligned to real-world software applications.

2. Instruction and training aligned to certifications exam objectives to ensure students develop the job readiness skills needed to achieve employment and career success.

3. Comprehensive course planning and management tools to save instructors' time and empower them to focus on teaching.

4. Flexibility to quickly and easily connect with anyone on Paradigm's team. As a small, specialized provider of learning solutions, Paradigm is deeply invested in supporting educators and students.

5. Technical support, plus exceptional implementation preparation.